



*Your Event Management Specialist (EMS) for Meetings, Conferences and Events*

## **7 Deadly Common Mistakes Companies Make When Planning Meetings and Conferences (Part I)**

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Do your business or association meetings appear to run efficiently? Or is it common for chaos to prevail on the days of your event? Common mistakes or omissions can prevent the delivery of effective meetings, events and conferences. Below are seven deadly common mistakes to avoid:

1. **Cost Drives Decisions** - Companies often utilize inexperienced staff or "those who are available on site" to cut costs. The execution of the meeting suffers as the roles that individuals play are not in the realm of "their specialty" and quick on-the-spot decisions aren't made with experience. Due to the timing and quick response required, band-aids are placed on the issues that arise and may go unnoticed by the attendees. However, in the long run these decisions cost a great deal of money for the company.

2. **Attendee Management is Not A Priority** - First, the development of online or manual registration is not clearly identified until the reports are run and the realization that important data is missing. It costs additional manpower and money to send another email to registrants, which in turn must be entered into the system manually. This provides the perception that planning the registration process was not a priority during development - a poor reflection on the meeting planning. Secondly, auditing of the data is an important ongoing process which is usually missed. Here is what most meeting planners are saying:

- ✓ Attendee management leaves me no time to audit and utilize the information to drive down the cost of my meeting and ensure that data is accurate
- ✓ Attendee management and registration leaves me no time to handle the other important aspects of my meeting

3. **Strategic Plan Not Developed** – Many companies decide to hold a meeting without developing a strategic plan. There is no long-term plan of action, organized system of policies or procedures and tools which is essential to reduce costs, provide excellent customer service and leverage the overall spend of the meeting. Companies forget return on investment, which is imperative for all stakeholders (participants, speakers, exhibitors and sponsors).

4. **Lack of Management of Food and Beverage** – More money will be lost in food and beverage than any other area of a meeting or event. Potential savings are missed without proper verification and recordkeeping, which not only impacts the essence and flow of the meeting for the participant but a large part of the overall budget.
  
5. **No Review of Goals and Objectives** – Once the goals and objectives are established, many times they are never reviewed again. Stakeholders decide which meetings or conferences to attend based on the goals, objectives and ROI (return on investment). If those goals and objectives are not met, stakeholders will not participate in the future.
  
6. **Poor Negotiation of Room Rates and Room Block Management** – Negotiated room rates and concessions are available; however, those organizing the meeting do not understand this avenue of savings through the use of a third party company. Third party companies have leverage relative to volume and standard rates with preferred vendors which they can never achieve on their own. The charge for this service is free to the company planning the meeting. Additionally room block auditing and management of attrition is another “hot spot” for loss of funds and can be provided by a third party company which will also save time and money.
  
7. **Ineffective On-Site Management** – The execution of the elements of the meeting must be to the letter when on site. Lack of experience and dedication, missing deadlines, poor follow through and ineffective customer service all play a major role in ineffective on-site management. Meeting management determines the value for stakeholders who may or may not return next year due to poor execution. Remember - stakeholders are also looking for return on investment.

***Watch for our next article coming soon: "Capture" Best Practices - Planning and Executing Cost Effective Meetings and Conferences (Part II)***

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